

## Effects of Outdoor Elections Campaign on Bahraini Youth

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### Abstract:

Mass media has long been perceived as a power tool that is always used by the different parties in a society in order to affect the public in a certain way. Nevertheless politicians and election candidates are one of those parties that highly depend on the different media to convey their messages to the public in order to affect their cognitive, affective, and behavioural systems.

The researcher is aiming to know the effect of outdoor campaign in the latest election in Bahrain and whether it encouraged people to vote and feel the importance of their vote. In addition to understand the level of awareness of each candidate and the information they knew through the outdoor campaign.

This study can be considered a descriptive study portraying the effect of the exposure to outdoor elections campaign in Bahrain among Bahraini youth. The research will be mainly concerned with presenting this effect in relevance to their awareness, attitude, and behaviour. Its main question: Does the exposure of the studied sample (50 male and female aged 18-25) to outdoor election campaign, has an effect on their cognitive, affective and behavioural systems?

The results of the survey stated that 100% see the outdoor ads in the election campaign and the rate of seeing outdoor election per week, 62.16% of the questionnaire takers answered that they see it more than 9 times a week, 8.10% see it 7-9 times a week, 16.21% see it 4-6 times a week, and 13.51% see it 1-3 times a week. This shows the effect of the repetition of those ads.

### Introduction:

Mass media has long been perceived as a power tool that is always used by the different parties in a society in order to affect the public in a certain way. Nevertheless politicians and election candidates are one of those parties that highly depend on the different media to convey their messages to the public in order to affect their cognitive, affective, and behavioural systems.

### Election In Bahrain:

The National Assembly is bicameral with the lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, having 40 members elected in single-seat constituencies for a four year term. The upper house, the Shura Council, has 40 members appointed by the King of Bahrain, with the stated aim of giving a voice to minority communities and technocratic experts within the legislative process. Supporters of the system refer to long established democracies the United Kingdom and Canada operating with this bicameralism with an appointed upper chamber and an elected lower chamber. Opponents of this system point out that unlike the bicameral systems in the UK and Canada, the Bahraini system gives the unelected upper house equal or more legislative power than the elected lower house, allowing the King to control all legislation. Opponents also point out that the current system was imposed unilaterally by the King, violating the 1973 Constitution and a 2001 signed agreement with the Bahraini opposition. (Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections\\_in\\_Bahrain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Bahrain))

### Research Objective:

The researcher is aiming to know the effect of outdoor campaign in the latest election in Bahrain and whether it encouraged people to vote and feel the importance of their vote. In addition to understand the level of awareness of each candidate and the information they knew through the outdoor campaign.

### Literature Review:

✦ Political Communication: Political scientists have long recognized the dependence of politics on communications. Karl W. Deutsch showed how modernization and nationalism can be measured from patterns and flow of mail, telephone calls, and newspapers. The political system and the

communication system precisely parallel one another, and it is doubtful that one could exist without the other. (Roskin, et.al, 2008)

All political action is a reaction to communication of one kind or another. There are, however, different levels and types of communication. Face-to-face communication is the most basic and most effective for altering or reinforcing political opinions because it allows for dialogue where mass media cannot. Mass media generally reinforce existing political opinions but rarely convert anyone. (Roskin, et.al, 2008)

On the other hand, the persuasion process is sometimes seen from another angle, as proposed by the cognitive response theory. "This theory proposes that persuasion induced by a communication is actually self-persuasion produced by the thoughts that the person generates while reading, listening to or even just anticipating the communication." (Atkinson, et.al, 2000, P.662)

- ✦ Media and Outdoor Advertising Effects: The perception for the effects of the mass media has been seen from different perspectives, throughout a number of stages. Earliest studies described the great power of the mass media in influencing its audience. According to Serevin and Tankard (2001) this kind of conceptualization for the mass media effects is sometimes known as the bullet theory or the hypodermic needle theory. Later on these theories were perceived as "Not accurate" and were replaced by models that describe a less powerful mass media.

"This new conceptualization grew primarily out of election studies during the 1940s reported in the books *The People's Choice*. The new view attributed much less power to mass communication message. A major statement of this view, often called limited-effects of model, was presented in Joseph Klapper's book *The Effects of Mass Communication*." (Serevin and Tankard, 2001, p.13)

More recent research were conducted and viewed mass communication messages as powerful, yet, not as much as they were under the bullet theory. As Serevin and Tankard (2001) stated this new attribute might be called moderate effect. (Serevin and Tankard, 2001)

Measuring media effects can be related to its influence on the awareness, the attitude and the behaviour of the recipients. The relation between these three components has been a matter of concern and study for social scientists, especially mass communication experts and practitioners. Greenwald (1968) presented a model which states that attitude change is related to the thoughts that occur in the receiver's mind. He adds that "Retention of a message and acceptance of a message are two different things- an individual can learn the material in a message without undergoing attitude change." (As cited in Serevin and Tankard, 2001, p.173)

Advertising is a media content where effect is essential and targeted, as advertisers are usually aiming to influence and persuade the recipients. Arens and his colleagues (2009) define advertising as "The structured and composed non- personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods, services, and ideas) by identified sponsors through various media." (Arens et. al, 2009, p.4)

"Out-of-Home Media" is one of these various media that advertisers use to present their advertisements. It is the type of the media that reaches the audience out-side their home, and it includes the outdoor advertising.

According to Arens and his colleagues (2009) outdoor advertising was

probably the first advertising tool used ever, and even today it is used globally to communicate certain message or image to large audiences frequently and quickly at the lowest cost per thousand of any major medium. (Arens et. al, 2009)

The authors add that using outdoor advertising is increasing and more growth is expected as advertisers are searching for alternatives to the declining audiences and advertising clutter of the other types of mass media. Unlike other media, outdoor advertising can carry advertisers' messages all the time without any interruption. "It is never turned off, zipped, zapped, put aside, or left unopened. And it's big." (Arens et. al, 2009, p. 384)

One of the prominent advantages of outdoor advertising is its frequency, as people reaching these advertisements are continuously exposed to it. As mentioned by Arens and his colleagues (2009) "Most people reached with outdoor advertising see it daily." (Arens et. al, 2009, p. 386)

Parallel to this, Moriart, Mitchell and Wells(2009) mention that outdoor advertising is an integral part of a multiplatform advertising campaign as it is used to build an image to the proposed candidates for the election; image needs frequent exposure and this is a primary benefit of outdoor ads. (Moriart, et. al., 2009)

Determining the effective number of exposures to advertising is one of the issues that have been concerning advertising people, As Clow and Baack stated "One continuing issue facing advertisers is deciding how many times a person must be exposed to an ad before it has an impact. Most agree that a single exposure is not enough. Discovering the actual number has inspired a great deal of debate. Some agree it takes three exposures. Others say as many as 10. The basic rule, developed by Herbert Krugman, states it takes a minimum of three exposures for an advertisement to be effective. This is the Three-exposure hypothesis. Most media planners have assumed it for many years". (Clow and Baack, 2007, P.240)

On the same line, Moriart and his colleagues believe that, because of the very short time consumers are normally exposed to a traditional billboard message, typically, three to five seconds, the message must be short and the visual must have stopping power. (Moriart, Mitchell and Wells, 2009)

According to them, "The 30-day posting period is long enough so that these exposures can be seen as repositories of long-term brand image leading to favourable consumer attitude accumulation. It's like making a deposit in a bank and watching your wealth grow." (Moriart, et. al., 2009, P.291)

In addition to this, outdoor advertising is characterized by its geographic flexibility, as advertisers can place their messages in the areas they want. Demographic flexibility is also an advantage for outdoor advertising, as "Messages can be concentrated in areas frequented or traversed by young people, upper-income people, or people of specific ethnic background." (Arens et. al, 2009, p. 386)

- ✦ Youth And Politics: In the field of social sciences, age is one of the demographic variables that should be emphasised, as it usually has its influential effects in the studies conducted in this field.

Researchers have related age to the way people think, feel and act, especially when it comes to political and societal issues.

Roskin and his colleagues (2008) believe that two theories can explain the way age impacts political opinions, the life cycle and generation theories. According to them "The first, widely accepted, holds that people change as

they age. Thus young people are naturally radical and older people moderate or even conservative. With few responsibilities, young people can be idealistic and rebellious, but with the burdens of home, job, and children of their own, people tend to become conservative." (Roskin, et.al, 2008, P. 141)

**The Attentive Public:**

The attentive public, although fewer in number, has more political impact because they have ideas and articulate them, demonstrating political competence. Sometimes they can rouse the general public. (Roskin, Cord, Medeiros and Jones, 2008)

**Methodology:**

This study can be considered a descriptive study portraying the effect of the exposure to outdoor elections campaign in Bahrain among Bahraini youth. The research will be mainly concerned with presenting this effect in relevance to their awareness, attitude, and behaviour.

**Research Question:**

Does the exposure of the studied sample to outdoor election campaign, has an effect on their cognitive, affective and behavioural systems?

**Research Hypotheses:**

1. There is a significant relation between the level of exposure to outdoor election campaign and having awareness about the elections.
2. There is a significant relation between the level of exposure to outdoor election campaign and having a positive attitude towards the elections.
3. There is a significant relation between the level of exposure to outdoor election campaign and taking a positive behaviour towards the elections.

**Operational definitions of the variables of the study:**

- ⌘ Outdoor election campaign: In this research outdoor election campaign refers to any ad posted in the streets of Bahrain dealing with the elections, whether it is presenting the candidates and their programs, information about the election, or contents urging people to participate in the election process.
- ⌘ The level of exposure: In this research the level of exposure refers to the number of times per week the participant is exposed to the outdoor election ads that are posted in the streets of Bahrain.
- ⌘ Awareness about the elections: In this research having awareness about the election is indicated by having information and knowledge regarding the election process. For instance, information about the candidates and their programs, the places where voters are supposed to go, the elections system in Bahrain, etc
- ⌘ A positive attitude towards the elections: This variable refers to the likeness or the positive feelings toward the election process, and the intention and the willingness of the studied sample to participate in the elections.
- ⌘ A positive behaviour towards the elections: This variable refers to the positive action of the participant towards the election or taking the action and the step of participating and voting in the elections.

**Methods Of Data Collection:**

Data for this research will be collected using Self-Administered Questionnaire.

**Sample Of The Study:**

This study will be based on a non-probability purposive sample of Bahraini university youth, with the criteria of being exposed to outdoor election ads.

**Research Results:**

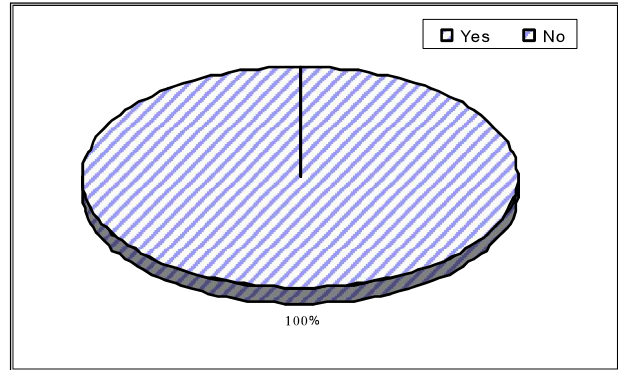


Chart (1) Rate of seeing any outdoor election ads posted on the street

As the survey was handed out, 100% of the survey takers answered with a "Yes" to the first question about the rate of seeing any outdoor election ads posted on the street.

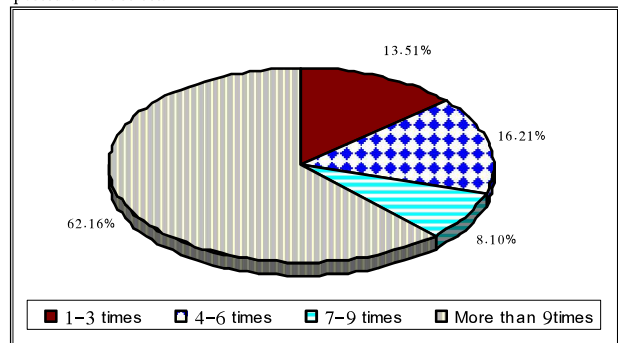


Chart (2) Rate of seeing any outdoor election ads per week

The second question was about the rate of seeing outdoor election per week, 62.16% of the questionnaire takers answered that they see it more than 9 times a week, 8.10% see it 7- 9 times a week, 16.21% see it 4- 6 times a week, and 13.51% see it 1- 3 times a week.

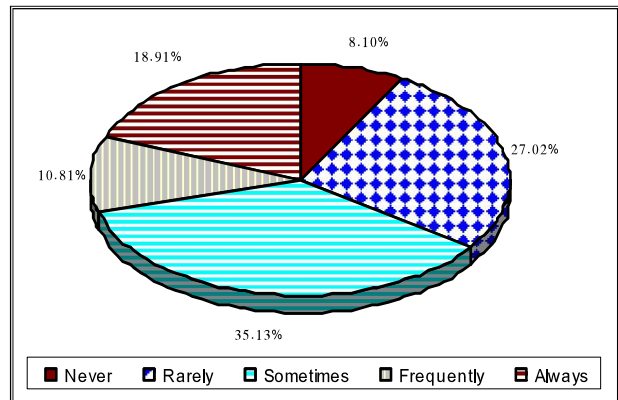


Chart (3) Getting information about the election process from outdoor election ads

The third question was about the outdoor election ads and if they were informative enough for the participants to get information about the election process from. 18.91% answered "Always", 10.81% answered "Frequently", the majority, which were 35.13% answered "Sometimes", 27.02% answered "Rarely", and only 8.10% answered "Never".

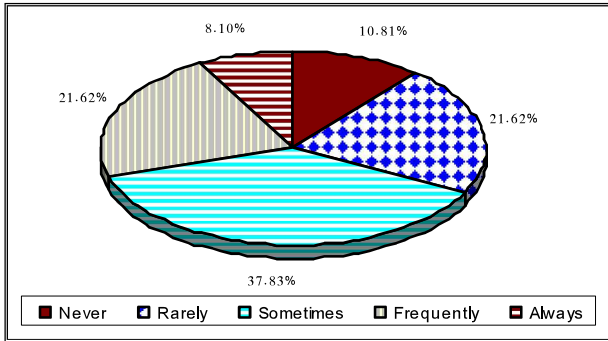


Chart (4) Getting information about the election candidate& their programs from outdoor election ads

8.10% of the participants said that they "Always" get information about the election candidates & their programs from the election outdoor ads, 21.62% said that they "Frequently" do, 37.83% said "Sometimes", 21.62% said "Rarely", and 10.81% said they "Never" do get information about the election candidates and their programs from outdoor election ads.

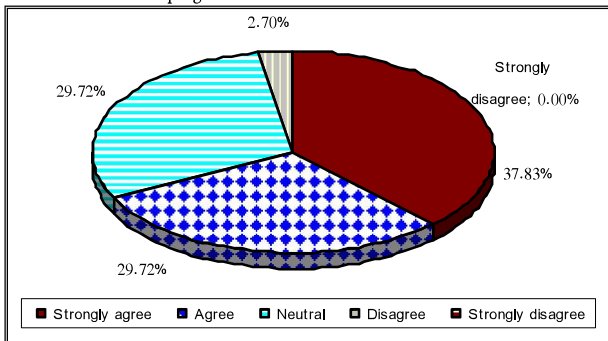


Chart (5) The importance for youth to participate and vote in the elections

37.83% of the participants "Strongly agree" that it is important for youth to participate and vote in elections, 29.72% of the participants "Agree", 29.72% of the participants are "Neutral", and 2.70% of the participants "Disagree".

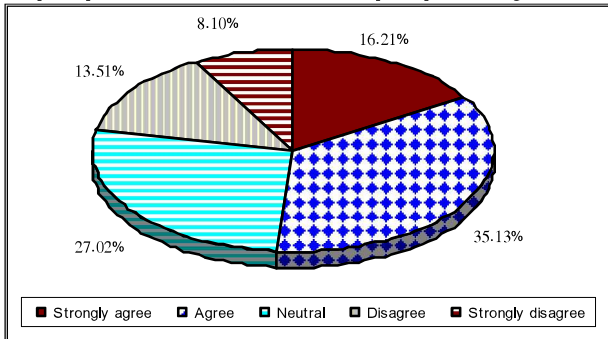


Chart (6) Is the election Process beneficial for the Bahrain society

27.02% of the survey takers "Strongly agree" that the election process is beneficial for the Bahraini society, 45.94% "Agree", 13.51% are "Neutral", and 8.10% of the survey takers think that the election process is not beneficial for the Bahraini society.

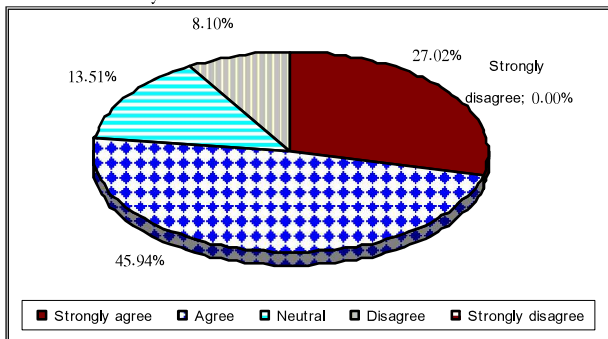


Chart (7) Seeking further information about the election process& the proposed candidates

16.21% of the survey takers "Strongly agree" that they are seeking further information about the election process & the proposed candidates, 35.13% "Agree", 29.72% are "Neutral", 13.51% "Disagree", and 8.10% "Strongly disagree".

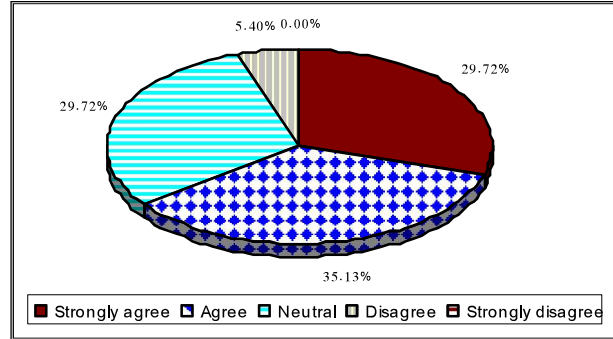


Chart (8) Encouraging others to go and vote in the elections

The majority, 35.13% of the participants "Agree" about encouraging others to go& vote in the elections, 29.72% of the participants "Strongly agree" while the other 29.72% of the participants are "Neutral", and lastly 5.40% "Disagree" about encouraging other to go & vote.

**References:**

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**المخلص****دور الدعاية الانتخابية وتأثيرها على الشباب البحرينيين**

طالما كان ينظر إلى وسائل الإعلام على انها أداة قوة التي تستخدم دائما من قبل مختلف الأفراد في المجتمع، من أجل التأثير على العامة بطريقة معينة. مع هذا قد يعتمد الكثير من السياسيين والمرشحين في الإنتخابات على الإعلام بشكل كبير في نقل رسالتهم إلى كافة الأفراد بهدف التأثير على أنظمتهم الإدراكية والعاطفية والسلوكية.

يهدف الباحث إلى معرفة أثر حملات الإنتخابات الخارجية في البحرين واما اذا كانت تساهم في تشجيع الناس على التصويت وتضفيهم الإحساس بأهمية هذا التصويت. وأيضاً لمعرفة مستوى إدراك الشباب لكل مرشح ومعرفة المعلومات التي يتلقونها من خلال هذه الحملات الانتخابية الخارجية.

يمكن اعتبار هذا البحث على انه دراسة وصفية تصف تأثير التعرض الى هذه الحملات الانتخابية الخارجية في البحرين من قبل الشاب البحريني. سيكون البحث معنى بشكل رئيسي إلى إظهار علاقة تأثير هذه الحملات في وعي الشباب وسلوكهم ومواقفهم. والسؤال الرئيسي هو: هل التعرض إلى النموذج المدروس لحملات الإنتخابات الخارجية له تأثير على مستوى الشباب الإدراكي والعاطفي والسلوكي؟

أظهرت نتائج الدراسة بأن نسبة ١٠٠% من العينة المكونة من ٥٠ طالب وطالبة في سن الجامعة (١٨-٢٥) يتعرضوا للإعلانات الخارجية للحملات الانتخابية، ونسبة التعرض لهذه الحملات كل اسبوع حسب الإجابات المذكورة في الاستبيان هي كالآتي: ٦٢,١٦% يرون هذه الحملات أكثر من ٩ مرات في الإسبوع، ونسبة ٨,١٠% يرونها من ٧ إلى ٩ مرات في الإسبوع، ونسبة ١٦,٢١% يتعرضون لها من ٤ إلى ٦ مرات في الإسبوع، ١٣,٥١% يتعرضون لهذه الحملات مرة إلى ٣ مرات في الإسبوع مما يوضح أهمية هذه الحملات وتكرارها.